

THE BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA

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## BOUND TO BE CLASSICS: Fine Editions and the American Literary Canon

By Megan Benton

This article is adapted from a talk given by Megan Benton at a joint meeting of the Roxburghe Club and the Colophon Club on April 17, 2001, at the University Club in San Francisco

1930 WAS A MONUMENTAL YEAR for American bookmaking. It was the year in which memorable decisions about paper, type, illustration, layout, binding, and content came together with great artistry and craftsmanship to produce two now-legendary books: the Lakeside Press's heralded edition of *Moby-Dick*, designed and illustrated by Rockwell Kent, and the Random House/Grabhorn Press's equally acclaimed edition of *Leaves of Grass*, with decorations by Valenti Angelo. Each book was promptly hailed a masterpiece, and the ensuing decades have only strengthened the place often accorded them atop the bibliophilic charts.

I do not intend to discuss their design and production here; that's pretty well-trodden territory. Even without illustrations, I am convinced that most of you could conjure up images of those famous editions in your head: Ishmael falling headlong through a black starry sky in one of Kent's illustrations; Whitman's long lines given memorable gusto in the Grabhorns' sturdily archaic Goudy Newstyle type.

Instead I want to tackle a couple of questions. What if, instead of *Moby-Dick* and *Leaves of Grass*, those two books had been editions of, say, Joel Chandler Harris's *Uncle Remus*, or something by Ambrose Bierce? (These were both discussed as options for the projects.) With other texts, would those two great 1930 productions still rest at the pinnacle of American bookmaking artistry? Is it merely coincidence that these landmarks of modern American fine printing present the texts that are now generally regarded as the greatest American novel and volume of poems ever produced?

To some degree I confess that I think it is merely fortuitous that the two greatest productions of America's golden age of fine printing happen to coincide with the nation's most highly regarded literary texts. I certainly don't con-



tend that Ed Grabhorn and Bennett Cerf and George Littell and Rockwell Kent, the men who chose Whitman's and Melville's texts for their special projects, possessed any special literary acumen. Even so, I believe there is a great deal more to the story of this convergence of literary and bibliophilic greatness. I am going to try to make the case tonight that fine editions in the 1920s and 30s played a part, even an important part, in establishing and reifying — exalting in a concrete way — something that most people at the time regarded as an oxymoron, American literature.

To make that case, we must begin with the cultural climate of the 1920s. In that watershed decade, two cultural trajectories crossed and, I believe, fused. The twenties witnessed two remarkable developments in America: finely printed books were published and bought on an unprecedented scale, and for the first time something boldly called "American literature" began to appear among course offerings at the nation's leading colleges and universities. While others have traced the histories of each of these developments, they have rarely been considered together—which is what I intend to do here. I think they are intimately related to each other. In fact, I believe that they spring from kindred concerns and energies and that in subtle but significant ways their triumphs were even mutually dependent. Because I'll be using "big picture" terms here, I must ask forgiveness for the degree of generalization that involves. While I am convinced the generalizations are valid, I am also aware that they often oversimplify what is in fact an exceedingly complex story.

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Both the notion of “fine printing” and that of “literature” came to mean more or less what they do today only in the latter half of the nineteenth century. And both emerged for basically the same reason, the perceived need to make qualitative distinctions in the face of a burgeoning growth in the numbers of both readers and printed texts.

When fine printers of the twenties explained why they undertook their craft, as many did in manifesto-like statements launching their imprints or their businesses, they usually described their mission as one of reviving lost or neglected standards of craftsmanship. Most invoked the bookmaking ideas of William Morris, urging a return to pre-industrial methods and materials and a refusal to compromise quality with considerations of economy, speed, or popular taste. Although of course there have always been skilled and even masterful printers, the term *fine printing* really did not register much meaning, in its modern sense of a set of principles as much as a level of achievement, until it surfaced in the context of Morris’s handcraft revival in the 1890s. Such distinction would have made little sense before the 1820s or so, when all books were composed and printed by hand on handmade paper.

Why did fine printers’ pledges to restore high standards of bookmaking strike such a resonant chord in the 1920s? Well, certainly the rapid mechanization of the printing, papermaking, and typesetting trades in the nineteenth century had dramatically changed not only the way books were made but the nature of the physical object itself. Although books still remained the most elite form of print — distinct from the newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, broadsides, and other printed materials that seemed to blanket the nation — they were now cheaper, more plentiful, and so more “ordinary,” more expendable, than ever before. The unprecedented quantity of mass-produced books was linked in most minds with the commercial energies that fueled their production. For many, books’ material cheapness meant that their essential nature had been cheapened and compromised as well.

Technological changes have often triggered fears of cultural decay. Purists in the fifteenth century insisted that print could never replicate the nature of “real” or manuscript books, and a similar lament echoes today as electronic technologies seem to threaten the integrity, if not the very existence, of printed books. But I think the anxiety was especially acute in the 1920s because the Book, with a capital B, seemed one of the few familiar bastions of cultural import just when the notion of “culture” itself, in the sense of a noble Western tradition of progress and civilization, seemed at its shakiest.

In the aftermath of a bloody and disillusioning world war that left Europe emotionally, spiritually, and nearly literally bankrupt, the United States entered the 1920s as the new leader among Western nations. Its military and economic and industrial strength was unrivaled. In almost every arena in which international leadership is measured, the torch had apparently passed to the U.S., if



only because it seemed to be the only nation still standing. But in the case of cultural leadership, not a few feared that surely that torch had been dropped.

And to be sure, critics found plenty about contemporary American society to ridicule. Sinclair Lewis garnered international acclaim with his merciless portraits of provincial American angst, and writer H.L. Mencken regaled cynical readers with contemptuous accounts of what he dubbed the American booboisie. America seemed the land of bumpkins and Babbitts, of greedy businessmen, shyster evangelists, and vacuous flappers. Hardly the nurturing stronghold of the Western cultural tradition.

Or might it be, or be able to become, just that? Despite Mencken's sniggering, many Americans were determined that the answer could be yes. But they were hampered by more than cynical writers. The war's brutal depletion of Europe's spirits and resources had rekindled with critical urgency the long-troubling matter of modern America's relation to its colonial origins. Because its language and its religious and other cultural institutions were largely derived from – and long dependent upon – European, especially English, forebears, it wasn't easy to declare American culture peer to, much less foremost among, the great Western national traditions. The first essential step in the effort was to firmly anchor the American present to the European past.

The boom in fine book publishing was, I think, part of that effort. The best evidence for this is the physical forms of the books themselves. Fine publishing was first and foremost about Bookness – a self-conscious focus on the character of the tangible object itself, as distinct from the text on its pages. Equating quality with pre-industrial forms, many fine books were strikingly historicized, with their medieval and renaissance-inspired typefaces and page layouts, their hand-made papers, and so on. Their design and handcrafted manufacture not only repudiated the so-called "soul-less" machinery of the industrial nineteenth century but also dramatically linked American bookmaking to a past most of which it had never actually experienced.

Although physical form was the most important and defining aspect of fine publishing, fineness needed to make sense in terms of content as well. After all, presumably the whole purpose of a book is to preserve and honor its text, so form and content needed to be matched — in substance as well as style. But this was easier said than done. For fine publishers, finding suitable content on which to bestow their design and production efforts was often a real headache.

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Their most common solution, to find worthy works of literature, seems so obvious now that it is important to point out that at the time, *literature*, as we understand the term today, was a fairly new concept. It had gained general acceptance only at about the same time as the term *fine printing*, and for reasons so similar that their marriage in the 1920s was a particularly fruitful one, under which both flourished.

Before the nineteenth century, to speak of one's command of literature connoted literacy more generally, itself a sufficient marker of education and advantage. But by the middle of the century, as the ability to read and access to books became increasingly commonplace, literature came to be a term reserved for a special kind of text, soon defined as imaginative writing of enduring or timeless, even universal, value. This new definition excluded not only most nonfiction works of science, theology, law, and so on but also the vast amounts of contemporary poetry and fiction deemed to have only transitory or limited appeal. Knowing literature or having literary sensibilities, now newly associated with discerning, superior moral and aesthetic judgment or taste, replaced literacy per se as a marker of social class. A command of literature became a potent new form of cultural capital, something that imparted elite class distinction to those who had it. Accordingly, in the 1870s and 1880s the study of this new thing called literature joined rhetoric and classical languages in American college curricula under the new disciplinary rubric of English. Like fine printing, then, literature both drew its authority from a historical tradition and bestowed cultural distinction upon those relative few who understood it.

This new sense of literature, embodied in a discrete canon or core of texts selected to be studied in colleges and universities, in many ways provided the crucial ingredient that fine printers needed — the worthy cause upon which they could lavish their talents. Fine printers usually described this easy and rewarding editorial strategy in one simple word: Classics.

But the term "classics" was even more slippery then than it is today. How did American fine publishers in the twenties define them? Generally, "classics" meant literature in the new sense I've just described. Classics were reprinted texts of a former era (often not very distant) that were hailed by critics and, accordingly, valued by readers as the "best" works from the European literary heritage. The most successful fine publisher of the century, George Macy, took this editorial strategy to the bank when he founded the Limited Editions Club in 1929 with the pledge to print only classics. He defined them as those "fundamental books — always the same books — [that] lie at the base of our culture, and form part of our spirit's very texture." This definition not only reassured buyers of the unassailable value of their purchases but also played upon their anxieties by making ownership of classic literature, especially in fine editions, foundational to any claim to culture.



Classics provided texts that reflected the same cultural values that fine printing embodied. It's no surprise that more than half of the fine editions produced in the twenties featured texts written or published in earlier eras, and more than a third of them featured literary works. They ranged from biblical and ancient texts to works by such then-recent authors as Thomas Hardy and Oscar Wilde, covering many historical periods, subject matters, and literary styles. In a decade when only about fifteen per cent of trade books published were reprints of earlier work, and when "classics" represented only three per cent of American recreational reading, this eclectic variety of older, established literary work firmly linked modern American fine books with an enduring Western cultural tradition. In content as well as form, fine editions of "timeless" texts staunchly resisted the ephemeral, fickle, and popular. They girded those who produced and bought them with a sense of cultural heritage and stewardship in a postwar era marked both by iconoclasm and Babbitt.

Lest I leave the impression that fine printers and publishers saw themselves primarily as cultural guardians of great literature, however, I must add that they often chose to publish classics for shrewd reasons that had nothing to do with literary principles or judgment. Ironically, classics were a perfect choice for most fine publishers precisely because they usually had little or no editorial aspirations, and in fact they often lacked anything more than a high school education. Fine publishers relied on classics because they usually came without a living author who expected to be paid or who might be tempted to meddle in design or marketing. Classics needed little advertising or promotion, and they offered prime opportunities for artistic interpretation, since a fine edition didn't exactly have to be readable *per se*. Legibility, as Bob Grabhorn once wryly remarked, was for ordinary editions.

Yet the desire to establish and honor a distinguishing cultural heritage was troubled by the ambiguous role of Americans within that tradition. Before the twentieth century, it was problematic to speak of American literature both because nothing produced here was deemed truly literary — that is, in the same league with Shakespeare or Milton — and because, without a discrete national language, American writing still seemed merely a derivative subset of English. It was considered neither literature nor distinctly American. Of course America had its well-known "standard authors" — Bryant, Emerson, Holmes, Whittier, and Longfellow — but they were taught to schoolchildren as exercises in oratory and rhetoric, not studied critically for their historical value or "deeper meanings." No American authors were included on the reading lists of those new college courses in literature.

But in the 1920s, that changed. Spurred, like the fine printing market, by the sense that a postwar cultural sea-change had catapulted America into a new position relative to Europe, critics and scholars for the first time seriously asserted claims for an American literature. New conditions called for a radical reassessment of both parts of the equation. Some of the texts produced in



America's past did indeed hold timeless moral and aesthetic value, some argued, and the ways in which those texts were unlike their European counterparts now constituted the distinctive national tradition so essential to literary status. Europe's day had passed, America's had arrived; it was time to recognize American culture as not only legitimately grounded in the larger tradition but as an active, in fact now the premier, contributor to it.

Fine printers and publishers were, as I've said, driven by a material rather than an editorial agenda. Yet, necessarily savvy to the nationalist impulses that stirred their own energies and the desires of their customers, many sensed the need to reconcile their mission to reinvigorate Western bookmaking traditions with their identity as modern Americans. It seemed a shame that many buyers flat-out preferred English writers, as more failsafe cultural goods, as fine publisher Crosby Gaige complained. He figured simply that "our American poets were too close to us to assume their real importance." But this tension grew as the decade progressed, even if few really grappled with it. As Bob Grabhorn explained bluntly some forty years later in an interview, "we got the idea, since we are American printers, we'd better use American classics."

Especially by the late twenties, others shared his thinking. In my analysis of three hundred fine editions published between 1920 and 1932, I discovered that thirty-one of the one hundred and eight editions of classics (critically acclaimed works of imaginative literature from past eras), or just under thirty percent, were written by seventeen American authors. England was home to more authors of classics editions by only a slim margin, with thirty-five by thirty-two different authors. Given that American literature was only just then gaining recognition, this remarkable proportion suggests that fine printing and the newly sanctioned territory of American literature served each other's interests well.

The turn to American literature for fine editions stemmed from two intermingled impulses. To some fine printers, including American titles among the classics was a gesture of national pride that helped to bolster their status, to establish them as equal if not superior to their English and European counterparts. Like all good book designers, fine printers knew that the way in which a text is presented affects how it is understood and valued; a fine edition could give a text's cultural stature a considerable boost. The great Bruce Rogers once confided when asked "how to print a classic," that "the classic itself is relatively unimportant; in fact, you can make any reasonable piece of literature a classic for book collectors ... merely by printing it in an acceptable and, if possible, an unusual or luxurious style." Although here he's more interested in poking fun at collectors who don't care a whit about reading their beautiful books, Rogers knew better than anyone that fine bookmaking was indeed a powerful tool, if not of canon-making, then of canon-affirming.

The best example of a fine publisher who deliberately used fine formats to assert the cultural significance of his texts was Joseph Blumenthal. Blumenthal devoted his Spiral Press imprint to fine editions of "unavailable and unusual"

American literary titles. More than any other fine publisher, Blumenthal gave serious care to editorial selection and treatment. His ambition was impressive. He planned fine editions of *The Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*, *The Day of Doom* by seventeenth-century New England Calvinist Michael Wigglesworth, a volume of *Selected Poems of Herman Melville*, a collection of tales by Ambrose Bierce, the poetry of Anne Bradstreet, and sonnets of Longfellow. Although he managed to publish only the Poe and Wigglesworth titles before the fine book market soured in the early thirties, Blumenthal never abandoned his determination to use fine editions to help elevate American work into the ranks of universal literary achievement.

For other fine publishers, including American texts among the classics helped to diminish the vaguely off-putting elitism of strictly European literary masterpieces. This was a nuance that required some careful balancing. George Macy pulled it off masterfully in his promotional brochures seeking subscribers to the Limited Editions Club. He wanted to appeal to their cultural ambitions, but also to their pride in things American. Clarifying his promise to publish only classics, Macy quickly added that the classics he meant were "not necessarily the most grave and solemn works;" they were not too highbrow, esoteric, or even particularly profound. Macy assured prospective Club members that "obscure 'literary items,' hitherto unpublished work, or works requiring a high degree of literary sophistication" would not be tolerated by the Club's editorial policies. While preferred authors included brand name favorites like Chaucer and Shakespeare, they also included newcomers in a more familiar, American vein. In fact, the first Club title, appearing in October 1929, was *Leaves of Grass*, beating the long-delayed Random House-Grabhorn edition to the market by about six months.

Turning to less daunting American authors in their search for classics also helped some fine publishers mitigate accusations that their editions simply cultivated snobbery and pretense. American classics were felt to fit more plausibly and comfortably on American bookshelves. These publishers were proud of the American power and vitality that had prevailed in the recent war, and they wished to enact a similar triumph of red-blooded, plain-speaking American literature over what they regarded as its aging, effete, and increasingly irrelevant European ancestors. Chicago printing giant R. R. Donnelley's president George Littell, for example, stipulated that the company's fine printing imprint, the Lakeside Press, would publish only "books of American literature that [are] interesting to read to the normal business man, as apart from those classics...which people look at and admire, but do not read.... We have picked books anyone of us would be glad to sit down at night and read for amusement...."

Undisguised national pride and even twenties-style "boosterism" loomed behind Littell's policy. For the Lakeside "Four American Books" project, a set of four editions illustrated by leading American artists, Littell approached about a



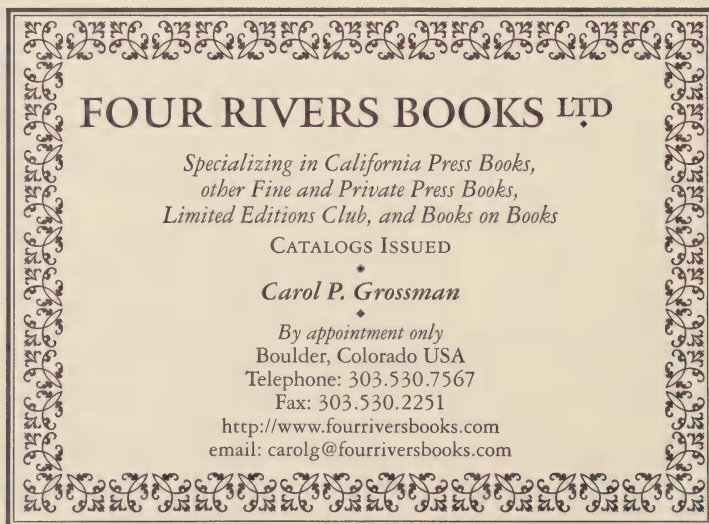
dozen illustrators and gave them a list of titles to choose from, titles that he had pre-screened to ensure that they merited the “exquisite” production the Lakeside project promised. His suggested titles included Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* and *Tom Sawyer*, Owen Wister’s *The Virginian*, Jack London’s *Call of the Wild*, Hawthorne’s *Scarlet Letter* and *House of the Seven Gables*, Joel Chandler Harris’s *Uncle Remus*, George Cable’s *Creole Days*, Henry James’s *The Portrait of a Lady* and *Daisy Miller*, Stephen Crane’s *Red Badge of Courage*, Washington Irving’s *Sketch Book*, Cooper’s *Last of the Mohicans*, stories by Bret Harte, Frank Norris, George Ade, and O. Henry, and Melville’s *Typee* and *Moby-Dick*. Ultimately *Moby-Dick* was selected, along with Poe’s *Tales*, Richard Henry Dana’s *Two Years Before the Mast*, and Thoreau’s *Walden*. All of the options were prose fiction, only two were by living authors, and all were written by men except for Willa Cather’s *My Antonia*.

Yet even within the context of their own national literary production, many postwar Americans struggled with a sense of cultural ambiguity rooted in the nation’s multiple ethnic heritages. While some defined the national character in ways that encompassed that diversity, others longed to affirm a place within a more familiar, fixed Western cultural tradition, as traced roughly from classical Greece and Rome through western European and particularly English aristocratic institutions. The demographics of its authors clearly associate American fine publishing with the latter impulse. White, Protestant men of northern European extraction clearly predominated among American authors of fine books. Of the ninety-six American authors of the editions I analyzed, all were evidently white, and only fifteen were women. It seems the desire to exalt those traditional cultural values, freighted with all the associations now fueling the so-called canon wars, outweighed the impulse to assert a truly new American literary idiom. This is best evident in decisions about which contemporary writers to honor with fine editions. It’s telling, for example, that the leading publisher of the Harlem Renaissance, Alfred Knopf, chose to produce several fine editions of his leading white authors, most notably Willa Cather and Joseph Hergesheimer, but none of the black writers who are now eclipsing them in the American canon.

The two attitudes toward American literature — some viewing it as a less lofty and so more palatable alternative to Anglo-European classics, and others aspiring to assert its place within, if not at the head of, that older tradition — was also reflected in notions about how it should be presented. That is, the politics of nationalism influenced design and production decisions as well as editorial ones. To those like Littell who found in American literature a refreshing, readable change from the European canon, American books invited more “democratic” and unpretentious forms. Others, like Blumenthal and the Grabhorns, used monumental bookmaking to signify that American literature deserved no less honor than that bestowed upon Shakespeare, Dante, and Chaucer.

Although few printers discussed design decisions explicitly in these terms, their overtones were apparent to at least one critic. Longtime fine printing reviewer Carl Rollins noted the disparity between material and literary stature in American fine editions. He demurred that “in the absence of masterpieces (and a democratic civilization perhaps does not induce *éditions de grand luxe*, although it may provide *expensive* books for its millionaires), perhaps the smaller, gem-like book may have its day.” He called the 1931 Grabhorn-Random House edition of *Red Badge of Courage* “far too large,” a book whose content failed to justify its form. He deemed only two American fine books truly worthy of their monumental bibliophilic form. Significantly, both productions featured landmark texts of pre-modern English culture: the 1932 Random House edition of *Beowulf*, illustrated by Rockwell Kent, and *The Book of Common Prayer* produced by D.B. Updike. The obvious anachronism of American literature in such grand pre-industrial forms made them simply too pretentious, Rollins thought.

In short, the remarkable boom in fine book publishing in the 1920s was about a whole lot more than beautiful books. In both content and form, those fine editions evoked a seamless heritage of Western civilization, aligning prosperous modern Americans with centuries of elite European culture. And in bridging those two seemingly disparate worlds, fine editions helped make it possible to think of American culture, specifically American literature, as the authentic, living heir to that illustrious past. Their success is apparent in how natural and appropriate it now seems that in 1930, when Bennett Cerf and Ed Grabhorn set out to produce the “finest book published in America,” and when



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George Littell and Rockwell Kent agreed to invest whatever it took to produce a masterpiece, they should have focused their talents and resources on *Leaves of Grass* and *Moby-Dick*.

Megan L. Benton is associate professor of English and director of the Publishing and Printing Arts Program at Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, Washington. She is the author of *Beauty and the Book: Fine Editions and Cultural Distinction in America*, Yale University Press, 2000.

## REMEMBERING SANFORD BERGER: The Wood beyond the World and the "Maid in the Meadow"

By Dr. Adela Spindler Roatcap

HERE ends the tale of the Wood beyond the World, made by William Morris, and printed by him at the Kelmscott Press, Upper Mall, Hammersmith. Finished the 30th day of May, 1894. Sold by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press.

IT SEEMS JUST A SHORT TIME AGO that I would look forward, every once in a while, to spending a day with the late Sanford Berger at his beautiful Kelmscott Carmel, catching up with the news relevant to William Morris and poring over Sandy's extensive collection, now ensconced at the Huntington Library, San Marino.

Our meetings usually began with a research theme that had been established by telephone or letter. Sandy asked that we be there by ten in the morning, welcomed us smilingly, and gently urged us to get started on the work at hand. Still, who could resist being distracted by the Art Nouveau furniture, the wealth of Edward Burne-Jones or William Morris drawings lining the stairwell, or the brilliant lengths of Morris's hand-blocked fabrics dazzling our eyes wherever we looked?

Downstairs, in the largest of the three rooms devoted to this collection, Sandy assembled books and whatever other materials would be relevant to our topic. There, surrounded by the colorful aura of Morris's great stained-glass win-



*The Mysterious Maid*

dows and within hearing of the Pacific, hardly more than a hundred feet away, Sandy held his mini-seminars, freely sharing the rarest of his treasures and expounding on the many still unresolved questions concerning the times and creative genius of William Morris, his friends and colleagues, the affairs of Morris & Company, and the splendid books issued by his Kelmscott Press. As the hours flew by, and new paths of inquiry came to the fore, Sandy would disappear into the recesses of his library to find materials either to support or demolish our theories. Always, at the rise of these meetings, the collection in total disarray, Sandy Berger, ever the astute teacher, assigned new tasks and readings to be done before we met again. He was lavish with souvenirs, duplicates and, thanks to his handy Xerox, copies of articles or illustrations which made a point. One never left empty-handed.

Often I had the pleasure of friends to help with the long drive: Jack Maclean, Esther and Harlan Kessel, Peter Koch, Janice Braun (Rare Book Librarian at Mills College), all shared a day of wonder at Kelmscott Carmel. On my very last visit we were joined by John Hawk, Special Collections Librarian at the University of San Francisco, where I have taught the history of art for the last eighteen years. For his contributions to scholarship and his generosity toward our Gleeson Library's Donohue Rare Book Room, Sanford Berger had been named a Sir Thomas More Fellow, and John Hawk, then new to our city, was anxious to meet him.

Taking the view that it is more important to ask an intelligent question than to know all the answers, we generally focused primarily on iconography: the visual language of the paintings, watercolors, prints, and drawings of William Morris, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Edward Burne-Jones. During our last meeting we discussed one of Edward Burne-Jones's most famous wood engravings. We wished to establish the identity of the lovely young lady striding so confidently across a field of flowers in the frontispiece chosen by Morris for the twenty-seventh book of his Kelmscott Press, *The Wood beyond the World*. Our simple question led us down unexpected paths.

I collect Kelmscott Press books — and like other collectors, have resisted the temptation of reading each of these fine volumes cover to cover. Characteristically, since we were going to discuss *The Wood beyond the World*, Sandy Berger had done the homework. The first question he asked as we went downstairs was, Did I know the name of the heroine of Morris's story? At that time, we assumed that she was the subject of the frontispiece. Actually, she had no name. Morris called her simply "the Maid." All we wanted to do was to find some primary document concerning Morris's intentions regarding "the Maid." Of the writing of this story, May Morris remembered:

My father had written some sixty-five pages of a tale called *The King's Son and the Carle's Son* before he threw it aside and made a fresh beginning with *The Wood beyond the World*. As we remember from the early days of his



narrative poetry, once he was dissatisfied with the work in hand, he rarely made any attempt at trimming or reforming, but consigned the manuscript to the waste-paper basket and started again with no idea of incorporating this material....<sup>1</sup>

Nothing here about the identity of the image in the frontispiece. William S. Peterson's *Bibliography*<sup>2</sup> tells us that Morris paid Burne-Jones twenty pounds for it, and that a design for this frontispiece does exist.<sup>3</sup> Since Morris was an assiduous letter-writer, it was our plan to look through his published correspondence. And sure enough, in Norman Kelvin's *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, we found our first real "pay dirt." Solving an iconographical riddle may not be as thrilling as reaching the South Pole or conquering the common cold, but it is thrilling nevertheless. Neither Sandy nor I expected the image of "the Maid" to be connected with that eminent late-Victorian political activist, poet, and Don Juan, Wilfred Scawen Blunt, author of *The Love-Lyrics and Songs of Proteus*, the third book to be issued by the Kelmscott Press. As so graphically described in his *Diaries*, Blunt had also succeeded Dante Gabriel Rossetti as intimate friend to Jane Morris.

In Kelvin's fourth volume of Morris's *Letters*, I found a reproduction of Sandro Botticelli's *Primavera*, a favorite painting among the Pre-Raphaelites.<sup>4</sup> But wait — this is not the famous painting at the Uffizi Gallery, but a life-size copy of Botticelli's painting in the form of a tapestry. As I looked at it more closely I was struck by how much the third figure from the right, the famous image of Flora, her flowing hair crowned with flowers, the way she strode across the flowered fields — had something... familiar about it.<sup>5</sup> It couldn't be, but it was — Burne-Jones's "the Maid"! The image of flora had been reversed, the position of the arms had been changed, and the flower-bedecked dress simplified, but — there was the same tilt of the head, a similar flowing dress girdled with roses, and even the meadow. It illustrated letter No. 2267, written by Morris on June 27, 1894, about a month after he finished printing *The Wood beyond the World*. Presumably, Burne-Jones had already been commissioned to design the frontispiece. The letter is addressed to Wilfrid Scawen Blunt. Morris wrote:

My dear Blunt

We have been going into the matter of the tapestry of Botticelli's Spring and find that we can do it for £ 544. though it will make a piece rather bigger than the Magi.

It is understood that it will be on the same scale as the Magi. It will make a very fine piece of tapestry and I have long wanted to do it.<sup>6</sup>

In an insert on the side of the *Primavera* tapestry, Kelvin shows us a detail from a portrait of Judith Blunt painted by Neville Lytton, the future Lord Lytton — Judith's husband-to-be. It strongly resembles the Burne-Jones design for the face of "the Maid." Wasting no time, I telephoned Sandy. He listened and said,

"I have to go downstairs and look — call you back." A few minutes later, there he was — as excited as could be. "Yes," he said, "it is 'the Maid.'"

Having established the true identity of "the Maid," we now had to find out why Judith Blunt's portrait had been used in *The Wood beyond the World*. Eventually Morris himself provided us with a plausible answer.

The designing and printing of books was only one of Morris's passions. Tapestry weaving — "Arras," as it was then called — was for him "the noblest of the weaving arts."<sup>7</sup> Morris had set up a loom in his bedroom at Kelmscott House, Hammersmith, and during the years in which the Kelmscott Press was active, he continued to supervise Merton Abbey as well as Morris & Co. During the spring of 1894, while *The Wood beyond the World* was being printed, Morris granted an interview to Aylmer Vallance, who then wrote "On the Revival of Tapestry-Weaving: An Interview with Mr. William Morris," letting Morris himself explain what was unique about his tapestry-weaving methods, for instance the

...high warp looms — we have three of them, by-the-way — where the weavers work, sitting at the back and only sees the face of the web by reflection in a mirror....<sup>8</sup>

Morris, then, would have woven the image of flora in reverse, as she is in the frontispiece. "For guidance," Morris said, he "had the advantage of working with Sir Edward Burne-Jones's designs." When Vallance asked him whether Sir Edward provided Morris with full-sized working cartoons, Morris explained:

Not exactly, though he goes all over the figure work. The original studies are not above 15 inches high....We have to have them enlarged by photography, in squares varying in size and number according to the full dimensions required. The enlarged sections are then fitted together, and the whole, now of proper size, submitted, together with a small colored study, to the artist for his revision and approval; and on these enlargements he does a great deal of work, especially to the heads and hands....

Among the treasures in Sandy's collection was a thin black-covered blank book, between the pages of which Edward Burne-Jones inserted a number of small pencil sketches and some quite finished drawings, all on thin paper, delicate, about four or five inches by about six to eight inches — portraits, illustrations for the Kelmscott Press, or designs for Morris & Co. We did not find "the Maid" among them.

According to Morris, Burne-Jones's cartoons were "not above 15 inches high." Presumably drawings which could be enlarged by photographic means could also be reduced in size. As the tapestry progressed, Morris and Burne-Jones were also engaged in getting the Chaucer ready to be printed. On August 10, 1894, its first pages were printed on vellum. Sandy Berger was, understandably, quite proud of his own copy of the Chaucer: it was Morris's presentation copy to Burne-Jones.



*The Wood beyond the World*, despite its lovely frontispiece, was not one of Morris's major books. Even though many copies had been sold, it languished unbound through the summer of 1894. So many other projects were afoot that the crush of work finally took a toll on Morris, as evident from a letter dated August 21, 1894. Returning to London from Kelmscott Manor, Morris realized that he had lost the inscription meant as the border of Blunt's tapestry. On the very next day he wrote:

My dear Blunt:

I am sorry to trouble you, but like a booby, having emptied my pocket, wherein was the tapestry inscription, looking for my ticket, in the train, I left it behind on the seat; so it is lost past hope. Would you kindly send me a copy at once, as we shall want to work it in very soon....<sup>9</sup>

The inscription informs us that "...this tapestry from sandro botticelli's picture was done at merton abbey by william morris for wilfrid scawen blunt to commemorate the coming of age of his daughter judith."

Morris thought of his tapestries as "...a mosaic of pieces of color made up of dyed threads." One of these "pieces" was the figure of Flora striding across a flowering meadow in the wooded island of Kythera, the island of perfect love. Morris's story tells of Walter, the son of a merchant, who, having crossed the land of guile, arrives at the wood beyond the world, is made king of an ancient city, with the Maid as his queen.... Was any part of this story inspired by Botticelli's *Primavera*? We might ask why William Morris had a copy of the painting hanging in his inner sanctum, the work room of Kelmscott House, Hammer-smith, where he kept his library — his precious incunabula. Morris does tell Blunt that he "...long wanted to do it," so whose idea was the *Primavera* tapestry? Was it Morris who suggested to Burne-Jones to use the reversed image of flora as the frontispiece of *The Wood beyond the World*? The wood-engraving of "the Maid" is small, measuring 85 mm by 135 mm, about 4 1/4 by 6 1/4 inches. Kelvin suggests that Emery Walker went to Italy to photograph the details of Botticelli's *Primavera*. On September 4, 1894, Morris wrote to Giacomo Boni:

My friend Mr. Emery Walker is going to Rome wishing to see to the photographing of some of the Botticellis there and as I am sure that it would be a pleasure to you to do anything you could to help a friend of mine, I make bold to ask if you would put him in the way to get permission to photograph the said pictures.... Mr. Walker is a genuine and enthusiastic lover of works of art, and a good archeologist.<sup>10</sup>

Although there are many paintings by Botticelli in Rome, notably the frescoes in the Vatican, the *Primavera* was then, as it is now, at the Uffizi in Florence. Would there have been enough time for Emery Walker to supply Burne-Jones with a photograph before William Harcourt Hooper engraved the

finished image? *The Wood beyond the World* was issued on October 19, 1894, but Edward Burne-Jones received the first press copy on October 7th. It is more plausible that Walker's photographs, if he made them, would have been used by Burne-Jones as inspiration for the Chaucer.

The Chaucer was finished on May 8, 1896, and two weeks later, on the 26th, the Morrisises, William and Jane, went to stay for a few days at Wilfrid and Anne Blunt's family home, Newbuildings Place, in Horsham, Sussex. Morris wanted to see his *Primavera* tapestry *in situ*. His health was failing fast, but as usual, he took the opportunity to accomplish "a little work." On May 28th he noted: "Better, did a little border. Went for a walk in the wood in the afternoon.... Was driven out a bit to see an old farm house. Very beautiful."

In Blunt's *Diaries*, he notes in the entry for May 29, 1896:

The Morrisises have been here at Newbuildings since Tuesday....The new piece of tapestry he has made me, Botticelli's Spring, is up and is very decorative and brilliant in the drawing-room, though the faces are hardly as good as they ought to be. It has been a great difficulty to execute it, he says, and it has turned out better than expected. We think the three figures with the flowers are March, April, and May. <sup>11</sup>

"The faces are hardly as good as they ought to be...." Had Blunt complained to Morris? And had Morris compensated the injured father by including the fair face of Judith Blunt as "the Maid" in his *The Wood beyond the World*? Blunt's list of "figures with flowers" suggests that flora represents not only his daughter Judith but also April. Might Morris have thought of "the Maid" as Spring, as April, recalling the opening lines of his Chaucer:

Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote  
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,  
And bathed every veyne in swich licour  
Of which vertu engendred is the flour....

*Vita brevis*. Death is no respecter of persons, neither of those we have loved and admired, nor of the few who, by getting our creative juices flowing, manage to bring out the best in us. I can still see my friend Sandy Berger as he waved a final good-by from the front door of his Kelmscott Carmel, urging us to come back soon, because, even after having spent another day pondering the affairs of William Morris, his friends and colleagues, the many works of Morris & Co., and the beautiful books of the Kelmscott Press, there was still so much left to question and thus to learn. There he is now, telling me, with a smile, to waste no time, but to hurry.



## NOTES:

1. May Morris, *Introduction, William Morris: The Complete Works*, London: Longmans Green and Co., 24 vols., 1910-1915. Vol 17.
2. William S. Peterson, *A Bibliography of the Kelmscott Press*, Oxford, 1984, pp. 71-74.
3. Peterson, *op. cit.*, p. 74. The design is at Yale (MS Vault Shelf 45A). For a description of wood-engraving at the Kelmscott Press, see pages xxix-xxx.
4. Norman Kelvin, ed., *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, Princeton University Press, 1996, Volume Four, 1893-1896, letter 2267, pp. 164-165.
5. For an excellent iconographical study of this painting, see Mirella Levi D'Ancona, *Botticelli's Primavera*, Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1982. Morris's *Primavera* tapestry, including its decorative border, is 12 feet 8 inches by 8 feet 8 inches, smaller than Botticelli's painting, which is 13 feet 8 inches by 8 feet 8 inches.
6. Blunt commissioned a copy of Morris & Co's *The Adoration of the Magi* and presented it as a gift to the Chapel at Exeter College, Oxford, Morris's alma mater. It hangs on the south side of the nave.
7. Aymer Vallance, *William Morris: His Art, Writing and Public Life*, London: George Bell & Sons, 1897, p. III.
8. Aymer Vallance, "On the Revival of Tapestry-Weaving: An Interview with Mr. William Morris," *The Studio*, Vol. 3, 1894, pp. 98-101.
9. Kelvin, *op. cit.*, letter 2296, p. 107.
10. *Ibid.*, letter 2300, p. 200
11. *Ibid.*, p. 164, note 1.

## REVIEW

*Pioneer Photographers of the Far West: A Biographical Dictionary, 1840-1865.* By Peter E. Palmquist and Thomas Kailbourn. Stanford University Press. Date? 679 pages. \$125

When I first started out to review books in 1951 for the *San Francisco Chronicle* (*Díos mio*, that's a half-century ago!), I was strongly advised not to over-use such adjectives as "classic" and "definitive" in evaluating non-fiction. For these words were bound to come back and haunt me when I would, later, encounter equally good or better books on the same subjects. I can't remember who warned me; I know it was not my boss, Joseph Henry Jackson, but probably one of my ex-professors in the History Department of U.C. Berkeley.

I've heeded this advice for fifty years, but if this volume in hand is not the definitive book on early Western photography, I'll eat my Borsalino, price-tag and all.

The Book Club has been extremely fortunate, of late, in having many gifted writers in its membership. For example, we have recently seen the comprehen-

sive bibliographies of Gary Kurutz and David Forbes, *The California Gold Rush* and the *Hawaiian National Bibliography*. These authors are now joined by Book Club member Peter Palmquist, who, with the aid of Thomas Kailbourn, has compiled this massive, informative, and readable — interesting — reference source book. Yes, it is a collective biography, but it also serves as a history of the pioneering period of photography in the Old West. At \$125, this extra-illustrated, fully annotated folio is a bargain. The seventy-one-page introduction serves as a historical overview of the subject, with the many sketches (some of them quite long) of individuals filling out the details of the story beautifully. The co-authors' Far West extends from Alaska through Mexico to Central America because of the latter area's role in the Gold Rush.

The real story begins with the first attempts to expand daguerreotypes and ambrotypes beyond portraits, to capture views of the wilderness West. Frémont's initial attempts were failures, but his Sephardic aide, Solomon Carvalho, finally made successful daguerreotypes in the field. Quickly, San Francisco became the West's center of this new art. Thanks to Palmquist and Kailbourn, we must add new names to those we already know — Carleton Watkins and Edward Muybridge. These new pioneers would be Robert H. Vance, Charles Leander Weed, and George R. Fardon.

Although much of the focus is on San Francisco and California, the co-authors do not neglect the rest of the West, discussing such Oregon photographers as Peter Britt and the Hazeltine brothers, Utah's Charles R. Savage and Mersena Cannon, and Hawaii's Hugo Stangenwald. Nor is the cut-off date of 1865 quite as arbitrary as it seems. If an individual was in business by '65, he is included, even if most of his work was later. Thus we find Alfred A. Hart of the Central Pacific's construction here, and also Louis Heller of the Modoc War in the Lava Beds.

Alas, the date does, however, rule out consideration of post-Civil War photographers like Charles Lummis, George Wharton James, and J. Smeaton Chase in Southern California, and Arnold Genthe, Louis J. Stellman, and Willard Worden in Northern California. One wishes that the compilers had carried the account up to 1900. (Incidentally, there is no suggestion in this volume of any proposed "sequel.") There is much to learn from this book. For example, the shift from daguerreotypes and portraiture to large glass plates and landscapes was quickly accompanied not only by the innovation of stereographs, but also magic lantern slides and other predecessors of the cinema; not just Muybridge's famous stop-action photography for Leland Stanford, but experimental panoramas, dioramas, and cycloramas. Some artists are included here because they fostered these devices although they were painters or sketch artists themselves, and not photographers — Charles Dorman Robinson, J. Ross Browne, Edward Vischer. However, a surprising number of artists did move "sidewise," as it were, from the palette and easel into photography — Albert Bierstadt, cari-



caturist Edward Jump, Charles G. Nahl, Carl F. Wimer, and, especially, John Mix Stanley.

In the biographical section you will find the first female photographers; the first Chinese-American cameraman, Ka Chau (of 'Frisco's Chinatown, of course); and the one Emperor Norton-caliber "nut case" of a photographer. He was Freddy Coombs, alias George Washington II.

You will also find many non-photographers, such as publishers of photos and stereos, like Bradley and Rulofson and Lawrence and Houseworth, plus those who made magazine, newspaper, and book illustration woodcuts, engravings, and lithographs from photographs, like Kuchel and Dressel and Britton and Rey.

Because of the beauty of Yosemite and the other images of Watkins, Muybridge, George Fiske, et al., we have tended to over-romanticize these individuals. They were artists, but they were also businessmen, good and bad. And sometimes they were jealous, hard-nosed rivals. Our hero Watkins thought nothing of slapping his name on prints made by Hart and Heller, and when he got into financial difficulties, Isaiah Taber snatched up his negatives, in turn, to make prints bearing the Taber name.

Nor did the purveyors of beautiful images of Yosemite Valley, or whatever, necessarily enjoy happy endings to their lives. Muybridge murdered his wife's lover on Mount St. Helena, and Watkins ended up in the lunatic asylum at Napa.

It seems to this reviewer that Stanford, even more so than "Cal," tended to drift away from Western Americana after the Gold Rush celebration of 1949. Well, if this book is a harbinger of things to come, we are in for some good publishing times, again.

— *Richard H. Dillon*

## Gifts & Acquisitions

A few short years ago, it seemed inconceivable that The Book Club of California would be communicating by electronic mail, but we now take it in our stride. The email note reprinted below reinforces the review that follows — much as the poetry and photography do in the work described — so it seemed worthwhile to include it. The Club is grateful to James Karman for our copy of this impressive book. (Professor Karman was a 1999 recipient of a Book Club grant and acknowledges the Club's help in this work.)

From: Mears, Allen K <allen.k.mears@baesystems.com>  
To: <bcc@slip.net>  
Subject: Stones of the Sur  
Date: Friday, August 03, 2001 11:53 AM

Dear BCC Friends:

Thought you might be interested in my bibliographic write up for this totally elegant and moving book. This is so much more intense and engaging than Headlands or any other photo/text book I've ever seen.

If you want to feature the book in your *News-Letter*, let me know. I think our membership would love to see more of the book.

Best regards,

Al

*Stones of the Sur, Poetry by Robinson Jeffers/Photographs by Morley Baer.*  
Selected and introduced by James Karman. Stanford University Press,  
Stanford, California, 2001.

This extraordinary edition pairs Jeffers's poetry with fifty-two photographs by the poet's friend and neighbor, renowned photographer Morley Baer. There are seventy-two poems printed, ranging from a single-line excerpt to complete short poems and excerpts from longer poems, several from the same poem. The book contains an acknowledgment section (listing Allen Mears, among others); Karman's wonderfully lucid and engaging introduction; his note on the rationale for selection and organization of the photos and poetry; the five main parts (I — Tor House, II — Continent's End, III — Oh Lovely Rock, v — Credo, and iv — The Old Stone-Mason); a list of the poems and a list of the photographs.

The photographs do not necessarily connect to the specific poems, but there is a thematic link and sense that places them closely in the mind of the reader. There is an emotional link between Jeffers's wonderful lines and the starkly detailed and textured photographs that lifts this work out of the realm of a simple coffee table book and makes it a work of art. Karman's introduction creates a unifying circle between Jeffers's poetry, the symbology of rock, Baer's photography, and his own love of stone. All of which culminate in the sense that the poetry, the photos and the two men are emotionally, mentally, and philosophically united. The photos stand on their own great merit as does the poetry. Together they create this sensitive, thundering, yet spiritual work.

Measuring 10.25" x 11.4" and consisting of 160 pages, the book was designed by Eleanor Mennick of Stanford University Press, typeset by James B. Brommer in 10/15 Galliard type, and printed on archival paper by Gardner Lithograph. It is printed in black and bound, with black free end papers, in pale gray cloth over boards. Titling information is printed in silver on the spine. The pictorial dust



wrapper is printed in black, blue, brown, gray, and white. Photos grace both covers. The back cover has a brief review by Robert Zaller. The inside flap of the rear (dw) cover lists short advertising blurbs for Jeffers's *Collected and Selected Poetry* and very brief biographies on Jeffers, Baer, and Karman.

—Allen Mears  
McLean, Virginia



Other recent gifts have included *The Yellow Barn Press: A History and Bibliography*, compiled by Jack Walsdorf and with history and comments by Neil Shaver. Through Mr. Shaver, Mr. Walsdorf presented this handsome boxed volume for the Club's collection, and we are grateful.

Neil Shaver's Yellow Barn Press began in Council Bluffs, Iowa, in the 1960s, but the first Yellow Barn imprint did not appear until 1979. The production of the Press shifted from poetry to books about books, and artist John DePol, since the *The Old Printing Office* (1985), has illustrated eighteen books for the Press. The *History and Bibliography* is a generous 9" x 12 1/2" book of 140 pages. There are fifty-eight illustrations, many of them wood engravings by John DePol, with an additional twenty-two plates in color. The text is set in Eric Gill's fourteen-point Perpetua and printed on Zerkall, a beautifully soft eggshell-colored paper. The binding is quarter black Oasis goat with a DePol patterned paper over boards and gold-stamped leather spine label. The clamshell box is black Japanese cloth. The edition is limited to 175 and is priced at \$400; the Club's copy is 130.

From the elegant title-page printed in red and black to the many illustrations, this book is a pleasure to peruse and to handle. For those interested in the details of an enduring private press and its remarkable productions — to name a few, the 1993 *Does Literature Exist?* by Julian Symons or the wonderful 1991 study by Stephen O. Saxe, *American Iron Hand Presses*, with John DePol's wood engravings, or Jack Walsdorf's *Elbert Hubbard: William Morris's Greatest Imitator* (1999), whose bibliographical entry is graced by a swatch of the pretty rust and black Japanese linen used in the binding — *The Yellow Barn Press* is an essential volume.



The Club received three important volumes from the library of the late Marion and Gale Herrick. These are the signed, limited edition of *Typologia* by Frederic W. Goudy (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1940); the Colt Press *Kamehameha King of the Hawaiian Islands*, with illustrations by Mallette Dean (1939), in a handsome full leather binding by Belle McMurtry, the design of which echos Dean's title-page illustration; and Tom Killion's *28 Views of Mount Tamalpais* (Cowell Press, Santa Cruz, California, 1975) printed by the artist/author on

handmade Japanese paper in Bembo in an edition of 100, fifty of which were bound in linen over boards — the Herricks' copy (linen-bound) is marked 53/92. These three very different books evoke the wide-ranging taste of Stephen Gale Herrick, who some time ago depleted his fine library in our favor. The Club is honored to possess these additional mementoes.



On August 27th last, Jack Stauffacher arranged for a reception at the Book Club for Enrico Tallone, son of Alberto Tallone (d. 1968) and present proprietor of Editore Tallone, Alpignano (near Torino), Italy. Those familiar with Jack's bibliography and history of his Greenwood Press, *A typographic journey*, will know of his admiration for the work of Alberto Tallone and his long friendship with the family. On this festive occasion, Enrico Tallone presented the Club with a unique leaf-book of his father's work, together with some more recent work of the Press; later, by post, another gift of books and ephemera arrived from the Press, including an illustrated history of the Tallone family, touching in its evocation of lives classically dedicated to arts and letters. We are pleased to have all these mementoes of the Tallones' visit — in October of 1972 the Club was the site of the first Tallone exhibit in the United States. We are fortunate in the continuities the love of books and fine printing foster.



Visitors from New York Jerry and Nancy Kelly presented us with two items from the Aralia Press, Alexander Pope's *The Puzzling of the Grammarian*, published by James L. Weil, New Rochelle, New York, 2000, and *Aralia Press: Poetry and Fine Printing*, catalogue of an exhibit held at Colorado College, Colorado Springs, in the autumn of 2000. Jerry Kelly designed the latter, and both are charming. Thanks, and come back!



Nancy Hoyt gave us her copy of *The Alembic Press Guide*, Claire Bolton's compendium of sources useful to private press printers (Oxford, 3rd edition, revised and enlarged, 1991; copy No. 139 of 180). This practical international listing of places to buy fine paper or type or to learn how to print is delightfully illustrated by John R. Smith. It is pleasing to see Harold Berliner's Nevada City (California) typefoundry in the same directory as the Wookey Hole Paper Mill (Wells, Somerset, England). A new edition will be required, however; Andrew Hoyem is listed here (of course) as still on Bryant Street in San Francisco whereas he has (sigh of relief) now settled in at 1802 Hayes Street in the Presidio. Thank you, Nancy, for parting with this historic item.

## Serendipity

### MUSINGS BY THE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN:

After Tuesday, September 11, 2001, we know not what to write. That day, which the United Nations had designated the International Day of Peace, now knows no peace. We wish we could reverse our column rules in mourning. Previously, September 11 had been a day of joy for us, as it saw the birth of our firstborn, a bright and inquisitive girl, twenty-four years ago. Now, it has become a symbol for the rise, from Africa to Indonesia, of a perverted Islam that would destroy the modern world. This contest is not a mere learned debate, as San Francisco's alleged "progressives" advocate. We saw that malignant spirit of the new Dark Ages first, twenty years past, in Iran; it is currently virulent in Afghanistan. There, harsh Islamic Law would not tolerate the ancient relic of the largest standing Buddha statue in the world, nor will it allow even basic freedoms for women. In their "Jihad," or Holy War, their lives, and the lives of innocents are nothing; their "Great Satan" is Western Humanism. To get personal, this attack struck at the founding and foundation principles of the Book Club of California — finely printed glorifications of the written word and the free exchange of ideas. We intended to report that September 30 saw a celebration in front of the City Lights Bookstore, officially designated on July 16 as a San Francisco City landmark. However, the rejoicing was postponed. We wish the party had been held to mark a return to normalcy. Beat poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti co-founded City Lights in 1948 as a center for radical and bohemian literature. It still carries that stock, but Mayor Willie Brown's scheduled presence shows that it has become accepted and honored for its differentness. That was the spirit assaulted, but not vanquished, on September 11. True to form, Ferlinghetti, as well as other anti-war protesters from the 1960s, contributed to *Peace News*, a twelve-page tabloid issued the day before with a press run of seventeen thousand copies. Honors continue. In the Southland, Doyce B. Nunis, Jr., celebrates his fortieth year editing the *Southern California Quarterly*, a million dollar *pro bono* gift to the Historical Society of Southern California. The Society is accepting donations to help honor Nunis by endowing one issue in 2002 as a paean to his accomplishments. Meantime, Gloria Ricci Lothrop, an editorial assistant for the *Quarterly*, has shown an ecumenical spirit. In 2000, she drew together articles from the California Historical Society's *California History* describing our citizens from Mediterranean Italy. Signed copies of *Fulfilling the Promise of California: An Anthology of Essays on the Italian American Experience in California* are available for only \$25 from the Historical Society of Southern California [Lummis House, 200 East Avenue 43, Los Angeles, CA 90031; [www.socalhistory.org](http://www.socalhistory.org)]. We will carry on. As we reagain our spirit, printer Patrick Reagh delivered BCC publication 214, *Jasper O'Farrell: Surveyor, Farmer, and Politician* that same devastating September week. Reagh operates at reaghmarkable speed. Why, it was only



June 2000 when we received Geoffrey Mawn's thesis to edit. The first biography of this pioneer Californian is now yours to acquire at \$65. Impress all you know with the true story of Market Street's diagonal course.

Close on the surveying chains of Jasper O'Farrell, the following week Jim Wehlage sent *John De Pol Illustrator* to the bindery; in October, Peter Koch ketched the first proofs of Director Roger Larson's *George Sterling Letters to Ambrose Bierce, 1900-1912*; and Liz Seaton's *California WPA Printmakers* was ready for a press. Readers of the Fall QN-L have before them collector Don Fleming's lively sketch of artist De Pol. We eyed Wehlage's handsome signatures with many illustrations in Publication Committee meeting, but by the time this appears, they will be the book! Meantime, Liz Seaton, who received her doctorate for a study of print makers for the New Deal's Work Projects Administration nationwide, at Book Club request turned her talents to California. She presents brief biographies and sample works for forty-six print makers from Maxine Albro (American Indian Pottery) to Lloyd William Wulf (Unfinished Argument). In between are, for example, Karl Baumann (Mirage); David P. Chun (Chinatown); Grace Clements (Reconsiderations of Time and Space, April 1, 1937); Mallette Dean (High Tide); Nils Gren (Silent Men); Edward Hagedorn (On Guard); Hilaire Hiler (Abstract Figure); Sargent Claude Johnson (Lenox Avenue); Paul Hembleton Landacre (Forest Fire); Arthur G. Murphy (Bridge Worker); Miné Okubo (Abstraction); Otis Oldfield (Bay Bridge); White Bead Quann (Coyote Stealing Bag); Lala Eva Rivol (Petroglyph, Matua Flat, Ventura County); Charles Surendorf (From Belvedere); and Tyrus Yu Wong (Wah Kung). KD Kurutz knows them all, but many are strangers to us; a Publication Meeting glimpse of illustrations presents a tantalizing smorgasbord of California prints from 1935 to 1941.

From long study, we know it takes one vivacious girl to write about another. We are quite fond of both, but so a jealous husband will not slap us, we will begin with Lisle Lester. We first encountered this spunky lass through the columns of the San Francisco *Pacific Monthly*, and later purchased a set. We admired her frugality, as an impecunious publisher, pushing a new office chair down Montgomery Street to save delivery charges. Enraptured by her charms, we even forgave her for learning to set type under Beriah Brown, the traitorous editor of the San Francisco *Democratic Press*, soon to be renamed the *Examiner*.

Lisle Lester became known around San Francisco in the Civil War year of 1864 for having the audacity to teach women to set type. She would open a new avenue of work in spite of the Typographical Union. We went on to publish the first article on her (*The Californians*, March 1986), which became our entry to meet the famed Roger Levenson. Lester is, of course, the "Dynamic Personality" of his *Women in Printing* (1994).

Lester had a national interest as a noted dramatist, theater critic, travel writer, and woman's rights activist — a career 125 years ago that the Taliban forbid

today. Fay Campbell Kaynor of Amherst, Massachusetts, proposed to write a biography, and we and Levenson encouraged her, especially as she writes with a sprightly pen. The Kaynors, who celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary a while back, heat their home with wood, battle for historic preservation and the environment, and go camping. Best of all, as the book jacket states, "They have no television." Kaynor can let the books inside her come out. Check *Lapdogs and Bloomer Girls: The Life and Times of Lisle Lester, 1837-1888* (Los Angeles: Eves Eye Press, 2001), \$22.95.

We were pleased to read in the *SF Weekly* (July 25, 2001) about the new respectability of Romance novels, as the library of our Better Half slowly creeps into garage closets, displacing our many accumulations. Then, in an article on the Pacific Center for the Books Arts in the August 29th issue, Karen Silver opened: "Most people simply read books, but I like to smell them. New books are the best." Alas for us antiquarians! "The stink of old books is musty and organic, like a garden going to seed, but a new book smells like hope." Amen! This institution founded in 1980 may have to move from 300 DeHaro Street, where its studio opened in 1996, when its lease expires in February 2002. Regardless, it is so vibrant, that it needs more than the 2,000 square feet. For information on membership, their publication *Amperсанд*, and classes, call 415-621-5744.

We also note that Pacific Book Auction Galleries has become what all knew it to be anyway: "PBA Galleries." No more wondering about initials and abbreviations! The electronic world has allowed PBA to expand services — just what book-buyers wish. The Club's George Fox is one of the principals. For those unable to see his magnificent display of colored lithographic nineteenth-century trade cards in the Book Club rooms, Fox plans to provide a monographic keepsake. We learn that Chronicle Books wishes a book-length study of trade cards, a subject with few publications. Fox certainly has the collection to do it! Visit PBA Galleries at 133 Kearny Street, 4th floor, San Francisco, [www.pbagalleries.com](http://www.pbagalleries.com), or 415-989-2665.

While on eye-catching subjects, we invite readers to catch (or should that be "Koch"?) the summer issue of the *Journal of San Diego History*. This special publication, 110 pages, says it all in its title: "Capturing the Light, Visions of the Land: San Diego Landscape Painters." Curators Nicky Holland and Denny Stone organized this issue to serve as a catalogue for the Historical Society's exhibit of seventeen artists smitten by that southern land. Biographies, memoirs, and plates, including thirty-two in color, bring alive an era from 1885 to 1950.

Well, the Gold Rush is not over until the last nugget is found. Malcolm Barker's three volumes of *San Francisco Memories, 1835-1906* (1994-1998) drew mainly on published accounts; Peter Browning has compiled two similar works comprising selections mostly taken from contemporary newspapers. In *San Francisco/Yerba Buena: From the Beginnings to the Gold Rush, 1769-1849* (Lafayette, CA:

Great West Books, 1998; \$17.95), we like the windy poem by gaseous journalist and newspaper historian Edward C. Kemble honoring April 20, 1847:

Ever blowing, colder growing, sweeping madly through the Town,  
 Never ceasing, ever teasing, never pleasing, never down.  
     Day or night, dark or light,  
     Sands a-flying, clapboards sighing —  
     Groaning, moaning, whistling shrill,  
     Shrieking wild, and never still.

Browning followed the first with a second chronologically, but the first printed (we hope everyone is happily confused!), *To the Golden Shore: America Goes to California, 1849* (1995; \$22.95), or four hundred pages of travel, mining, and urban accounts. "Digging is very like a lottery," one gold seeker wrote from Wood's Diggings (Sonora) on August 17, 1849, as he told about an Irishman who "dug out a round lump of stone, banded and interlaced with about \$300 worth of gold [15 troy ounces]." The lucky finder then "sagely remarked," as transcribed: "Be Jesus, thur's lots of the yellow stuff here yit, if yez only know where to dig for it — faith, I like to dig ditches where the gravil is mixed wid that same kind of Dust!" Would not we all!

— Robert J. Chandler



In honor of its one hundred years of "ethical leadership and scholarship in American bookselling," The Arthur H. Clark Company will be honored at the Gold Rush Book Fair. The "Honored Guest Bookseller" will occupy Booth No. 1 at the Fair, to be held on Saturday, June 8, 2002, in Nevada City, California. (The first such event, which was a great success, honored William Reese Company of New Haven, Connecticut.) The Arthur H. Clark Company of Spokane, Washington, is now headed by the grandson of its founder, Club member Robert Clark. Fair sponsor John Hardy declares that the venerable company is unparalleled for its "unselfish record of publishing the history of the American West." Mark the calendar and plan to visit delightful Nevada City's Gold Rush Fair in the Northern Mines gold country next June.



Fanciers of artists' books might consider a pilgrimage to the California Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco's Lincoln Park. "Artists' Books in the Modern Era 1870-2000, the Reva and David Logan Collection of Illustrated Books," will be on display through January 6, 2002. Also to be seen through that date is "In Focus: Photographically Illustrated Books 1857-1930," from the Reva and David Logan Collection.



In conjunction with these exhibits was a fine series of demonstrations on Saturday afternoons in October, November, and early December. Guest curator Peter Koch worked with the Fine Arts Museums and the San Francisco Center for the Book; book artists sharing their skills were Marie C. Dern, John DeMerritt, Peggy Gotthold, Juliana Pennington, Peggy deMouthé, Peter Koch, Eleanore E. Ramsey, and Mary Laird.



The Club's Jack Stuppin sent a catalogue for a show we were sorry not to have seen — his paintings of the Sonoma landscape, which was at the Los Angeles Art Show in mid-September. Mr. Stuppin's oils and acrylics depict the natural beauties of his part of the world — bright hills, clouds, curving waterways, blossoming apple trees. Says critic John Fitz Gibbon, "we learn about the Earthly Paradise when we look at these paintings." For a hint of what these wonderful *plein air* works are like, go to [www.jackstuppin.com](http://www.jackstuppin.com).



Club member G. Thomas Tanselle's essay regarding the importance of keeping original texts appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement* of August 24, 2001, and is definitely worth reading. "Books and newspapers may be awkward (that is to say expensive) to house," he writes, "but libraries exist to house them; the attendant difficulties have to be faced if libraries are to perform their function." Mr. Tanselle sets out four "reasons why reproduced forms of texts can never be fully adequate substitutes for the originals." A summary would not do justice to this eloquent outline — perhaps a trip to the local library....

## In Memoriam: HAROLD WOLLENBERG

Harold Wollenberg died peacefully in his sleep on June 29, 2001, just two weeks after celebrating his ninety-fifth birthday. He had suffered from congestive heart disease for several years.

Harold was born in June, 1905, two months after the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire. His father was superintendent of the Laguna Honda Relief Home, and Harold and his brothers, Albert and Ralph, grew up in the neighborhood west of Twin Peaks when that area of the city was still primarily dunes and vegetable fields. He remembered riding his horse, Dynamite, to school, and playing with Ishi, who was then living at nearby University of California Hospital.

Harold attend Lowell High School and the University of California, graduating from Berkeley with a degree in engineering. He was a loyal Old Blue for the rest of his life, rooting for Cal athletic teams and supporting the university's

library collections and academic programs. Harold and his future wife, Leah Levy, met at Berkeley. Their marriage lasted more than sixty years, until Leah's death, in 1990. They had two sons, Harold, Jr., and Charles.

After college, Harold worked briefly for Pacific Gas & Electric before taking a job installing sound systems in movie theaters as the film industry shifted from silent films to "talkies." Harold and Leah were married in Colorado and spent their honeymoon traveling in the Rockies, visiting tiny mining towns where he retrofitted the local cinemas.

In the mid-1930s, Harold began a forty-year career with the Langevin Company, a San Francisco engineering firm that installed and maintained sound systems in most Bay Area stadiums, auditoriums, and public buildings. During World War II, he oversaw the installation of sound equipment in hundreds of vessels built in Bay Area shipyards. He was also in charge of the public address system at the first meeting of the United Nations in San Francisco in 1945. For many years, he managed the audio pick-up at the national political conventions for the major radio and television networks.

Harold was introduced to the world of rare and fine books when Leah began studying hand bookbinding in the 1930s. He bought books for her to bind. After his retirement from Langevin in the late 1970s, he had time to become immersed in the book world, making hand-crafted boxes for Leah's books and becoming an active member of the Roxburghe and Colophon Clubs as well as The Book Club of California, on whose Board of Directors he served and of which he was Vice President. He was a regular at the Club's Monday night receptions until slowed by illness. He and Leah were also active in the Friends of The Bancroft Library and the Gleeson Library Associates; in spite of his Cal loyalties, he was a strong supporter of the Stanford Library as well.

Harold enjoyed Sunday evening family gatherings that usually included at least some of his three grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. He died in the family home he and Leah purchased in 1939, a house located just a few blocks from the grounds of the Laguna Honda Hospital where he played as a child nine decades ago.

— Charles Wollenberg

## In Memoriam: STEPHEN GALE HERRICK

Former Club Board member, benefactor, and Oscar Lewis Award recipient S. Gale Herrick died on September 8, 2001, at the age of ninety-two.

Mr. Herrick, a 1931 graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, in Civil Engineering, ended a distinguished career in his family's business (Herrick Iron Works, as it was then called) in 1960. He soon became active in far different worlds. A love of theater moved him to become business manager for the Actor's Workshop; he went to New York with the group when it left San Francisco—at the munificent salary of one dollar a year. Returning to San Francisco in the 1970s, he pursued his interest in bookbinding and book collecting.



For his generous support of the book arts, especially fine hand bookbinding, he received the Club's Oscar Lewis Award in 1998. Mr. Herrick was also a lover of classical music and lent generous and active support to many cultural and philanthropic groups in the Bay Area. (Please see Gifts & Acquisitions in this issue of the *QN-L*.) His wife, Marion Schaller Herrick, predeceased him by a short while; five children and ten grandchildren survive.

## Elected to Membership

### *New Patron Members*

<i>Name</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Sponsor</i>
John Lie	Cambridge, MA	Andrew Hoyem
Fred Rotondaro	Alexandria, VA	Membership Committee
Katherine Spelman	San Francisco	Roberta Cairney

### *New Sustaining Members*

<i>Name</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Sponsor</i>
Stephen Becker	San Francisco	Robert J. Chandler
William Bond	Groesbeck, TX	Michael Heaston

### *New Regular Members*

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Kathy Barr	San Francisco	Mary K. Austin
Claudia Cohen	Easthampton, MA	Membership Committee
Mark Edlund	Los Angeles	Robert Clark
Dey Gosse	New York, NY	Jane Ross Moore
Joel Harris	Antioch	Deke & Joanne Sonnichsen
Drué Mathies	Nevada City	Claudine Chalmers
Richard Morrison	Groesbeck, TX	Michael Heaston
Joseph L. Murray	Buffalo, NY	Timothy Hawley
& Timothy J. Conroy		
Jean F. Porter	Grosse Pointe Park, MI	Barbara Land
David L. Rados	Nashville, TN	Andrew Hoyem
Don Severson	Honolulu, HI	Andrew Hoyem
Pamela S. Wood	Phoenix, AZ	Joseph J. D'Ambrosio

### *New Library Member*

<i>Name</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Sponsor</i>
C.S.U. Sacramento	Sacramento	Vincent J. Lozito

*The following member has transferred from Sustaining to Patron status:*

James McClatchy	Carmichael
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*The following members have transferred from Regular to Sustaining Status:*

Jerome H. Buff	New York, NY
Austin E. Hills	San Francisco



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